Witnesses for the Persecution: Textual Communities of Exile under Constantius II

Abstract

During the reign of Constantius II (337-361), a number of Christian bishops were exiled from their sees, reportedly for their opposition to the emperor's 'Homoian' theological position. Several of them (Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers, Lucifer of Cagliari, Eusebius of Vercelli) responded to their institutional insecurity and geographical isolation by writing accounts of their experiences in a range of textual forms: letters to individuals or groups, historical narratives with quoted documents, formal invectives This article explores the variety of ways in which these examples of exilic literature construct different forms of communities in order to weave supportive narratives around the authors and their allies: Hilary and Lucifer emphasised their possession of parrhesia both within and through their texts; Athanasius constructed a network of opposition to heresy with himself as its focus; Eusebius presented himself as the lynchpin of a north Italian community which he could still lead from exile in Palestine. Through inscribing particular roles onto both their readers and other figures discussed within the texts, these exiled authors sought to foster their own reputations as leaders of these communities and arbiters of membership, thereby bolstering their positions at a time when their authority was under serious threat.

> I proclaim to you, Constantius, what I would have said to Nero, what Decius and Maximian would have heard from me: you fight against God, you rage against the Church, you persecute the saints, you detest those who proclaim Christ, you abolish religion, you are now a tyrant not just in human matters but also divine.[1]

These words appear early in a text known as the *In Constantium*, written by Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, probably early in the year 360.[2] His addressee is the emperor Constantius II, the sole surviving son of Constantine. Despite the vehement and abusive language employed by Hilary here, the emperor was, like him, a Christian. While Hilary, however, proclaimed his

adherence to the Nicene Creed, written at the Council of Nicaea in 325, Constantius promoted alternative views often labelled as 'Arian', because of their supposed association with the Alexandrian presbyter, Arius.[3] Hilary was one of a number of bishops exiled at this time, reportedly for their opposition to the emperor's religious policies. He was sent from his native Gaul to the eastern half of the empire and decided to respond to his situation with this vituperative pamphlet after his attempts to persuade Constantius had proven unsuccessful.[4] At around the same time, three other exiled Nicene bishops – Lucifer of Cagliari, Athanasius of Alexandria and Eusebius of Vercelli – also wrote texts that presented their treatment as the latest round of persecution of pious Christians.[5] The main villain of Eusebius' account was Patrophilus, the 'Arian' bishop of Scythopolis, but Athanasius and Lucifer, like Hilary, directed their ire against Constantius himself: the former stated that 'He is probably more vicious than Pilate. For while Pilate recognised the injustice and washed his hands, this man gnashes his teeth even more and exiles the blessed', while the latter produced a great array of colorful denunciations, including claiming that 'not one can be found, out of all those kings who are called tyrants, who was ever crueller, more detestable or a greater blasphemer than you'.[6]

These texts therefore represent a notable effusion of opposition literature against Constantius and his ecclesiastical policies during the final years of this reign, even though both Hilary and Athanasius had only recently written to the emperor in much more deferential terms.[7] There are some documented contacts between some of the bishops immediately before and after their exile, but it is unlikely that this set of writings is the product of a co-ordinated campaign by the four bishops.[8] They have been studied collectively for their invocation of the theme of persecution and martyrdom and the ways in which they construct particular images of both the emperor and their own authors.[9] This article will, however, deal with the relatively unexplored question of how these texts present themselves

as engaging with their audiences and, in particular, how they employ a variety of styles and modes of writing – invective, narrative, epistle – to construct different notions of orthodox textual communities. My primary aim is not to reconstruct the identities of the earliest individuals and groups to read these texts, even in those cases where some information is available: Athanasius' text may have been intended for monastic supporters in the first instance; Eusebius' letter names its recipients as his supporters in Vercelli and nearby towns; Hilary and Lucifer address Constantius directly, although he probably never encountered these works, despite evidence that Lucifer may have sent his invectives to the imperial court.[10] Instead, the following discussion will seek to distinguish between explicit 'direct' addressees and implied 'indirect' audiences for these works, exploring the ways in which they define their own audiences internally, how their literary form, content and tone, their 'genre', can suggest particular dramatic settings and ascribe roles onto those who encounter them. These invite the readers or hearers to imagine themselves witnessing or participating in scenes which enrol them into networks of orthodoxy where the authors are central figures despite, or sometimes because of, their status as exiles. In addition, some of these texts also include embedded accounts of earlier events, as well as documents purportedly written in response to them. The presence of these other dramatized moments of confrontation thereby creates further opportunities for presenting different direct and indirect audiences within narratives of pious resistance to persecution.

This term 'genre' is here employed with the meaning given to it by Gian Biagio Conte in his book *Genres and Readers*, which, despite focusing on Latin poetry and Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, offers useful avenues for the analysis of the forms of literature explored in this article. Conte takes issue with certain rigid conceptions of the term 'genre', especially those which fall into either of the extremes that he defines as 'empiricism' and 'theory'. Instead, he regards genre as a way of making sense of reality, describing genres as

'matrixes of works, to be conceived not as recipes but as strategies; they act in texts not *ante rem* or *post rem*, but *in re*'.[11] These relationships between texts, visible in both form and content, allow the audience to place what they are reading within their existing knowledge of literature, and the relationships therefore also affect their experience as readers. Conte goes on to argue that genres, by drawing upon the readers' prior textual encounters, ascribe roles not only to the author and the subject(s), but also to the audience:

> [Genres] are like strategies, inasmuch as they are procedures that imply a response, an addressee as an integral part of their own functioning, a precise addressee recognizable in the very form of the text. Every genre is a model of reality which mediates the empirical world. The text does not work upon the direct presence of "reality", but upon a selective representation of it. The genre, a paradigm of the things to represent, makes reality recognizable and meaningful by translating it into something it is not. This means that, in order to be perceived, the world must take on a form, become a model of meaning; and the literary genre's communicative strategies help the reader to construct a situation or a whole imaginary world.[12]

This article will therefore explore the different 'genres' employed by these authors and the ways in which these provided a range of opportunities for presenting textual communities based around these exiled clerics. The works of Hilary and Lucifer have the literary form of an invective oration, addressed directly to the emperor in the second person, as though he were actually present. Despite the fact that they were almost certainly never recited to him by their authors, however, this manner of writing invites the audience to imagine themselves as actors in a familiar scene, playing out a recognizable part that, in turn, forms an image of the speaker in their minds. Similarly, while Athanasius' *History of the Arians* is written not as a speech, but rather as a narrative account of the sufferings of the faithful, and most prominently of Athanasius himself, it nonetheless depicts the readers as a community of

embattled believers brought together through their support for, and deference towards, the exiled bishop of Alexandria. Moreover, this work also incorporates a number of episodes describing the experiences of other Nicene figures, including Liberius of Rome, Dionysius of Milan and Lucifer himself, as well as the text of a defiant letter purportedly written to Constantius by Ossius, the aged bishop of Cordoba.[13] These individual vignettes provide an opportunity for Athanasius to stage certain moments in his account in a manner that emphasizes the experiences of a collection of fearless confessors united in their defense of Athanasius' own orthodoxy, as well as allowing the text's readers privileged access to these episodes of pious defiance against autocracy. Likewise, Eusebius' text, which takes the form of a letter to his flock in northern Italy, also constructs a distinctive conception of identity and community through remarks about the audience and its relationship with the author, who is presented as a key arbiter of orthodoxy and a gatekeeper for acceptance into the ranks of the faithful. Although he has been exiled and is under guard in Scythopolis, Eusebius uses his epistle, together with an address to Patrophilus embedded within it, to claim that he is able to reach, direct and expand his network of support and continue to fulfil his episcopal functions. Despite the variations in their literary forms and rhetoric, these works all represent attempts by these exiled bishops to combat their insecurity by creating a sense of their continued relevance as central ecclesiastical figures who commanded widespread recognition and respect. They are united in their representation of exile as something which, despite their apparent isolation, does not prevent them from maintaining their central places within ecclesiastical communities, and could even enable them to expand and strengthen these empire-wide bonds of recognition, support and reverence.

The purpose of this article is not, therefore, to attempt to reconstruct the actual networks within which these clerical exiles operated. Historical research of that sort, together with its visualization in network maps, is certainly a valuable exercise, but it will always have

to contend with certain source difficulties: first, the surviving material is always fragmentary and incomplete, while different sorts of texts focus on individuals and their associations to differing degrees; second, and more significantly, many of these texts are narrative accounts, often of a highly partisan nature, which seek to construct a particular representation of the roles and significance of the 'main players' in these tales, together with the relationships between them.[14] Even when multiple sources are taken into account, a network map must, despite its appearance of scientific exactitude, always be understood as an agglomeration of subjective narrations of events, each with its own unique concerns, just as though a modern account of the period had assigned the same evidentiary value to all the extant texts and then combined them into a single, unified tale. Rather than ignoring or trying to mitigate this phenomenon, the central section of this article embraces it by experimenting with the use of network maps as a means of visualizing narrative itself, without making any assumptions about its relationship to reality. These images illustrate the relationships described in Athanasius' *History of the Arians* in a manner that complements and reinforces the more traditional written argument within which they sit, supporting it more clearly than multiple quotations and lengthy footnote references could by themselves. By employing this method to demonstrate how Athanasius chose to represent the ecclesiastical politics of his day and his own place within them, I hope to highlight the opportunities offered by this technology not only for 'historical' research but also for 'literary' analysis in the study of late antiquity.[15]

The Audiences of Invective in Lucifer and Hilary

In order to interpret the ways in which Lucifer and Hilary employed the invective genre to create these identities and roles for their audience(s), it is necessary to explore the relationship between encomia and polemical orations, together with the latter's ability to

present its author as a fearless free-speaker who proclaimed uncomfortable truths. Late-antique invective, as a form of rhetoric taught to elite young men as part of their education, had much in common with panegyric, only with the enumerating of vices replacing the celebration of virtues. Students were instructed to use the same topics in both types of oration, including family, upbringing and deeds, and to employ *synkrisis* with famous figures to emphasize the exceptional nature of their chosen subject.[16] Nonetheless, there were significant differences between the two forms. First, there were numerous opportunities for the public performance of panegyrics, not only to emperors but also to other important figures. In contrast, ceremonial occasions for invective were largely absent, although sometimes criticism of defunct rulers appeared as part of a panegyric of the current emperor. Second, while panegyrists did often argue for their credibility as accurate assessors of imperial power, the author of an invective, who challenged rather than supported the powerful, could more easily claim to be speaking the unvarnished truth.[17] Such a view of the greater sincerity of invective and other abusive literature has persisted into modern scholarship, often being seen as a moment when an author's anger and frustration caused them to reveal their true feelings with great vehemence.[18]

Moreover, ancient authors who attacked dead rulers, such as Pliny, Tacitus or Themistius, might be open to a charge of having suddenly changed their public statements to suit the prevailing political situation.[19] In contrast, people who criticized emperors during their lifetimes were immune from any such accusations, and might instead stake a claim to be fearlessly speaking out against tyranny, as the writers of these invectives were keen to do. Inherent to these texts was the argument that the author was now taking a stand and telling the truth about the emperor, despite the danger that this might involve for him. Hilary opened his *In Constantium* with the strident statement that 'It is time for speaking, since the time for being silent has now passed'.[20] He then followed this with an explanation not for attacking

Constantius now, but rather for keeping quiet about his terrible behavior for so long. His justification for his silence was that he did not want anyone to believe that he was speaking for any other reason than the proclamation of God's honest truth: 'I devoted so great a time to silence for that period so that no one would think that I speak for my own cause. Now I speak for no other cause than that of Christ: it is for him that I had to keep silent until now, and I understand that I must be silent no longer.'[21]

These comments are examples of the invocation of the classical idea of *parrhesia*. This Greek concept, sometimes equated with the Latin term *libertas*, refers to 'freedom', and particularly to 'freedom of speech', especially when used to tell uncomfortable facts to people in positions of authority and thus to 'speak truth to power'. In the Roman world, *parrhesia* was particularly associated with philosophers, who, following on from the example set by Socrates, could claim to disdain worldly concerns and to be willing to say what they felt was right, whatever the consequences.[22] In particular, the fourth-century orator Themistius repeatedly stressed his philosophical credentials in his speeches to establish a reputation for himself as outside the usual networks of power and patronage, regardless of the political reality that lay behind these grand statements.[23] He was always keen to adopt the persona not of an imperial functionary and high-ranking member of the senate of Constantinople, but of a noble possessor of *parrhesia*. This was then deployed in order to claim that his statements about emperors were much more reliable than those of other orators and thus to justify his panegyric, even proclaiming, shortly after the accession of Theodosius I, that 'when *parrhesia* is completely secure, then to opt for wicked and servile words … is ludicrous'.[24] Moreover, as both Peter Brown and Claudia Rapp have argued, late Roman bishops also sought to adopt this aspect of the philosophical persona for themselves as a means for gaining more influence over important governmental officials.[25]

Moreover, the concept of bold public speech to the powerful is also prominent in early Christian martyr literature, particularly accounts of confrontations between fearless Christians and persecuting Roman officials, which often allude to the Gospel episode of Christ before Pontius Pilate.[26] Whether the individuals involved ever actually spoke these words or not, it is clear that the people who wrote up their experiences presented this steadfast refusal to be cowed by the tyrannical authorities as a display of *parrhesia* that would be recognizable not only to other Christians but also to the wider educated population of the Roman world. Some of these texts, known as *acta*, even use the term *parrhesia* to describe the behavior of the martyrs, thereby making the similarities with philosophical virtue explicit for their audience.

This language of persecution and martyrdom appears throughout Hilary's invective, as can be seen in the opening quotation to this article, while Athanasius similarly sought to claim that the current maltreatment of Christians surpassed anything seen under pagan emperors: 'When has such great lawlessness ever been heard of before? The earlier persecutors were Hellenes, but they did not bring their idols into the churches. … This is not simply a persecution: it is more than a persecution – it is the prelude and preparation for the Antichrist.'[27] This rhetoric is even more prominent in Lucifer's writings, which are pervaded by examples drawn from biblical and later Christian stories: 'Who does not wish to be revealed to be a comrade and ally of the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs and all just men, rather than of Judas, whose imitator you have clearly been? John the Baptist was executed in prison by your pestilential companion Herod: the savagery of Herod killed James; the apostle John was exiled to an island; the blessed Peter was crucified; the blessed apostle Paul was bound, shut away in prisons, scourged, repeatedly stoned and finally killed.'[28] These bishops could thus play out the roles of the saints and martyrs listed here, while Constantius was stripped of his status as a Christian and instead presented as nothing

more than another Roman persecutor. Hilary even went so far as to call him 'a deceptive persecutor, a flattering enemy, Constantius the Antichrist'.[29]

The functioning of claims to *parrhesia* through the composition of an invective can also be glimpsed in a text written by the Neoplatonist philosopher and (eventually) Christian bishop, Synesius of Cyrene. Around the year 400, he travelled to Constantinople and unsuccessfully attempted to gain an audience with the emperor Arcadius. He responded by composing his *De regno*, a treatise on kingship that was also an invective, in which he described the young monarch as shut away in a palace that resembled a luxurious prison, 'just like someone bound with gold or rather with shackles worth many talents'.[30] Like the texts of Hilary and Lucifer, Synesius' work is written as though it were a speech delivered to the emperor, although it can only have been circulated (and perhaps recited) to a small, select group of people, not including the emperor himself. This piece involves significant criticism of Arcadius, including the rather obscure accusation that he resembled a marine animal known as a sea lung, living a secluded and hedonistic life.[31] Synesius opens the speech by requesting that, for a change, philosophy should be admitted to speak in the palace, not for its own sake, but in order to help Arcadius. Unlike the usual speeches, he says, which are empty of moral guidance and have only specious beauty, his words, philosophy's words, would be manly and august and would refuse to be bought off by the powerful and turned to unfree flattery. For, Synesius proudly declares, 'free speech would be of great value when heard by a king'.[32]

The *De regno* thus allows Synesius to claim to possess *parrhesia* in two separate but related ways: first, he argues within the text that he is using this freedom of speech in his supposed address to Arcadius. The emphasis on philosophy and the rejection of empty flattery in the oration stakes his claim as a fearless and truthful figure, in a manner that has many similarities to Themistius' rhetorical persona in his imperial panegyrics. There is,

however, a secondary claim to *parrhesia* that is not contained within the individual words that make up the text of *De regno*, but is instead created by the form and very existence of that text. By circulating a work that was highly critical of a living emperor, and which was presented as though it were actually being delivered directly to that emperor, Synesius constructed himself as a philosopher who was not afraid to deal with the powerful in a frank and honest manner. Even if his actual audience were aware that the oration had not been spoken before Arcadius, and almost certainly never would be, the fact that the emperor was addressed as 'you' within the work made the criticism of him feel much more direct. Writing a text that talked to Arcadius, rather than merely talked about him, made it much easier to imagine a scene in which Synesius stood before him to deliver these words. His *parrhesia* to the emperor may have ultimately been illusory, but that fact could not completely dispel the force of this taboo rhetorical form. Even within the safe confines of an 'echo chamber' provided by a small group of sympathetic friends, such an inflammatory depiction of an autocrat could not help but conjure up a frisson of danger.

This aspect of the text therefore provides a vital insight into the means by which invectives, internally, construct a sense of their own audience and then seek to project this identity onto the actual reader or listener. Despite their lack of actual delivery to the purported addressee, such texts nonetheless assumed the literary form of a polemical oration and evoked that familiar 'genre', in Conte's terms, either when read alone (but still probably aloud) or when recited in front of a small audience. If such an approach is applied to the texts of Hilary and Lucifer (as well as Synesius), it becomes possible to understand the advantages of using the form of direct invective for their attacks on imperial targets. They took their situations and recast them in a way that their readers would comprehend from other examples that they were familiar with, such as the famous political invectives of Demosthenes and Cicero or the schoolroom rhetorical exercises found in *progymnasmata*. Importantly, these

also implied a particular role for the audience to imagine themselves playing, that of the 'precise addressee' that Conte regards as being inherent to – and apparent from – the text's genre. This was not that of the ostensible direct addressee of the text, namely the disappointing or villainous emperor, but rather the indirect, larger group of addressees for any work of this sort: the group of people who might be gathered at a formal occasion on which a speech was delivered to a ruler. The physical audience for a grand public ceremony of this type was not, of course, likely to be an invective: even though educated men would be familiar with the form, the chances of someone actually reciting one to an emperor were exceptionally small, thereby investing any such text with greater force because it was such a rare and potentially dangerous object. Panegyrics, however, with a structure and subject very similar to invectives, were a much more common phenomenon. Modern scholarship on panegyrics emphasizes their place within late Roman ceremonies, and particularly stresses the importance of the presence of an audience, arguing that their performance was deeply concerned with creating a sense of consensus between ruler and ruled, especially those elites and officials on whom the government depended for its continued functioning and existence.[33] As Sabine MacCormack has argued, 'the delivery of a panegyric on an imperial occasion and in a formal ceremonial setting was not merely a method of making propaganda; it was also a token of legitimate rule and a form of popular consent, demonstrated by the presence of an audience'.[34] Just by being there, those who listened to such a speech were tacitly granting their approval to the version of reality that it constructed, since, in the words of Roger Rees, 'panegyric was not a dialogue but a drama and the mute characters had vital roles to play'.[35]

This emphasis on the ceremonial context of late Roman panegyrics in studies from recent decades has done much to rehabilitate this form of literature from the extremely negative judgements that it received in the central part of the twentieth century.[36] By

interpreting these repetitive writings as a key facet of the formalized and theatrical display of pomp and power, it has become possible for scholars to focus less on the more troubling questions of 'sincerity' and 'belief'. Panegyric can thus be treated as similar to other aspects of late Roman ceremony, such as acclamations or the *adoratio purpurae*, as phenomena that make sense within this broader context of ritualized communication between different levels of a highly stratified society. Yet, while this approach has done much to stop panegyrics being treated as 'empty rhetoric' and to ensure that they are the subject of serious study, it also risks restricting their ability to have meaning and significance beyond the specific context of their ceremonial recitation.[37] Panegyrics certainly were delivered on such occasions and existed symbiotically with other actions that reiterated political relationships, but it would be wrong to deprive them of any independent existence or force outside their initial public performance.

Rather, their prominence within these rituals of power and their place within educational handbooks of rhetoric not only made their form familiar, but also necessarily reminded the audience of other associations whenever and wherever they were encountered. While a panegyric certainly could, and often did, support the emperor's authority and demonstrate loyalty in a public context, it could also play a similar role if circulated privately or recited in front of a smaller, carefully selected group: despite not being embedded within a set of other ceremonies, it nonetheless retained its place within the complex and pervasive nexus of words, deeds and images that underpinned imperial power. There are a number of examples of texts which were 'published' in this way, either after being delivered, as with Pliny's *Panegyric* to Trajan, instead of being delivered, as with Libanius' final speeches addressed to the emperor Julian, or as though they had been delivered, as was the case with Libanius' orations concerning the Riot of the Statues.[38] In all these cases, however, the 'genre' of the work remained clear and recognizable, with an imagined and implied direct

addressee of the emperor, thereby allowing the audience of listeners or readers to conjure up the image of the text's public delivery. In doing so, they were invited to imagine both the orator and themselves as playing these vital roles within late Roman political culture that were inextricably associated with the text's literary form.

As I have discussed elsewhere, invectives, as inverted panegyrics, involve both the demolition of the emperor's credibility and legitimacy and also the exaltation of the authors as fearless bearers of *parrhesia*.[39] Importantly, however, through their literary form, their 'genre' as a direct address to an emperor, they also make implicit statements about the parts that the audience are supposed to play in the theatrical world that they construct. These texts seek to ascribe onto them roles as 'mute characters', whose job, like the assembled audience at a panegyric, is to witness and assent to the version of reality that the invectives promote. Moreover, the language of persecution and martyrdom in Hilary and Lucifer's texts also offer the readers the secondary, related generic model of martyr literature. They could picture themselves not merely as late Roman notables gathered at an imperial ceremony, but as observers in a defining moment in religious history. Like Renaissance patrons who had themselves painted into biblical scenes, or indeed the 'hyper-textualized' spaces in the late sixth-century Theban region discussed in Elisabeth O'Connell's contribution to this issue, the presence of these tropes granted the audience the great honor of feeling like they were present at the latest in a long line of confrontations between persecuting rulers and steadfast Christians that stretched all the way back to Christ and Pontius Pilate. To receive such a work, to read or hear it, even alone, enrolled an individual in an exclusive group, spatially dispersed, but united in this imagined, theatrical scene through having been trusted with such a dangerous and inflammatory text. The author or his confidants had judged them worthy to join this community of faithful opposition to a faithless tyrant, a community that also, and perhaps most importantly, accepted what was probably the key message of such a work: that

the exiled author himself, as the bearer of *parrhesia* and a fearless defender of orthodoxy, was the lynchpin of this scattered brotherhood of resistance to heresy.

Networks of Resistance in Athanasius

In contrast to these works by Hilary and Lucifer, Athanasius' *History of the Arians* takes the form of an account of events in the Church from 335 to 357, rather than a rhetorical invective. As has been discussed above, it employs the same polemical tone towards Constantius II and also makes extensive use of the themes of persecution and martyrdom, but it describes the emperor in the third person, rather than addressing him in the second. Nonetheless, it shares the same register of biblical examples and the same air of danger as these other writings: its inflammatory statements include accusing Constantius of being worse than Saul, Ahab, Pharaoh and Pilate, of slaughtering his family, of betraying his brother and of being the Antichrist.[40] Moreover, on a number of occasions Athanasius' dramatic narrative incorporates vignettes that, like the direct invectives by the other two bishops, play out scenes of confrontation between heretical emperor and defiant believers. In particular, a number of chapters in the central part of the text provide a tendentious account of the Councils of Arles in 353/4 and Milan in 355, where Paulinus of Trier, Dionysius of Milan, Lucifer of Cagliari and Eusebius of Vercelli were exiled, and the subsequent sequence of events in which pressure was also placed on Liberius of Rome and Ossius of Cordoba.[41] Constantius is presented as confronting Paulinus, Dionysius, Lucifer and Eusebius and making the outrageous statement that 'Whatever I want, let that be deemed a canon. The so-called bishops of Syria allow me to speak in this way. Either obey or be exiled.'[42] They, however, refused to be cowed and instead, as Athanasius states, 'employed much *parrhesia* towards him … and told him not to corrupt ecclesiastical affairs, nor to involve the Roman

empire in the government of the church, nor to introduce the Arian heresy into the church of God'.[43] After they directed these and other remarks to the emperor, they were sent off into exile, but everywhere they went, the people who saw them revered them as confessors.[44]

Similarly, after failing to corrupt Liberius through the ministrations of a eunuch named Eusebius, Constantius took more decisive action against the bishop of Rome in a manner very reminiscent of martyr *acta*: 'Liberius was dragged towards the emperor and addressed him with much *parrhesia*, saying "Stop persecuting Christians. Do not try to introduce impiety into the church. We are prepared to endure anything rather than be called Ariomaniacs."'[45] Liberius' address, which is presented in direct speech, continues with advice to avoid heresy and persecution, as well as quoting Scripture and declaring that he was not afraid of exile, and it is followed with an account of Constantius' response, which is described as worse than the actions taken by earlier enemies of Christianity.[46] The final episode in this sequence then provides the greatest opportunity for the audience to witness the defiant words of a Nicene bishop. After Constantius had attempted to hector the extremely old Ossius into submitting to his will, the bishop responded with a letter, which appears in full in Athanasius' text.[47] This therefore provides an opportunity for Ossius to present a lengthy and forthright riposte to Constantius, confronting him in the manner of a persecuted Christian, as the bishop had previously been in the pre-Constantinian 'Great Persecution'. The opening words of his statement very clearly equate the two events and celebrate the aged prelate's freedom of speech before the emperor: 'I first became a confessor when a persecution arose under your grandfather Maximian. If you persecute me, I stand ready now also to suffer absolutely anything rather than to spill innocent blood and betray the truth.'[48] As in his other accounts of Nicene opposition to Constantius, Athanasius also follows the bishop's defiant statement with an account of the emperor's cruelty in response.[49]

This sequence of episodes, placed within a larger historical narrative, therefore performs a function that bears some similarities to the formal, rhetorical invectives of Hilary and Lucifer. In each case, Athanasius sets up a scene involving a bishop or bishops directly engaging with the persecuting emperor in the manner of a martyr act. There are obvious questions that could be asked about the accuracy of these supposedly verbatim accounts, but it is instead worth considering them in the same manner as the other invectives, especially in terms of the role being given to the audience. The dialogization of these pivotal moments, with the characters being allowed to speak for themselves, alters the tone of the work. Moreover, to echo Roger Rees' description of panegyric, it is actually a dramatization, granting the reader privileged access into these otherwise inaccessible moments, as though they were witnesses to these displays of bravery and *parrhesia*. In fact, this technique of an embedded account is also employed by Lucifer within his own direct invective. He twice refers to an actual moment of confrontation between himself and Constantius, purportedly reminding the emperor of this scene: 'You know that, although I was standing in your palace within the curtain, the response you got from me was that your worthless authority had been trampled underfoot and all the servants of God agreed in mind, desire, purpose, strength and voice for the preservation of salvation'; 'Do you not remember, Constantius, that I said to the judges, while you listened with the curtain drawn, that even though you had ordered your whole army to direct all the weapons of your empire against us … we could never retreat from our resolved purpose?'.[50] As with the rest of Lucifer's work, while the ostensible addressee is Constantius, the audience, as the people who would need to be given an account of these events, are the indirect addressees. This text thus offers them access to another intimate scene of *parrhesia* nested within the larger display of the invective as a whole, thereby making them doubly complicit in Lucifer's self-construction.

For Athanasius, however, the focus is not primarily on his own personal confrontations with the heretical emperor. Within the narrative of the *History of the Arians*, he describes a pleasant meeting with Constantius in 346 during his return from exile in the West and also provides the text of a letter sent by the emperor after the death of his brother Constans in 350.[51] There is, however, no moment where he faces up to Constantius in the way that he describes other bishops as doing. Although much of the second half of the text relates the violence committed against Athanasius' supporters in Alexandria and Egypt, the bishop himself does not appear directly as a major character in this narrative.[52] Despite this, the whole text revolves around him, with Constantius supposedly deciding to persecute other Nicene figures because 'he observed the communion of the bishops with Athanasius and, like a man set alight by fire, he changed his mind'.[53] For both the heroes and the villains of this story, Athanasius is constantly linked with orthodoxy: the bishops at Arles and Milan were summoned by Constantius who 'ordered them to subscribe against Athanasius and be in communion with the heretics'; the eunuch Eusebius 'exhorted Liberius to subscribe against Athanasius and be in communion with the Arians', but the bishop of Rome replied 'How can we do this to Athanasius?' and demonstrated his 'hatred of the heresy and his vote for Athanasius'; Ossius boldly declared that 'I do not agree with the Arians, and I anathematise their heresy; nor do I subscribe against Athanasius, whom we absolved from blame'.[54]

I have noted before that Athanasius here presents himself as the hero of the story and makes favor or opposition towards himself the key criterion for classifying figures as orthodox or heretical.[55] Beyond that, however, he also uses these episodes to construct a sense of a Nicene community stretching across the empire and united by him. For each of these persecuted bishops, who display *parrhesia* in the manner of those persecuted by earlier pagan emperors, their support for – and communion with – the bishop of Alexandria is something that is intrinsically linked with their faith. Athanasius even remarks that, although

poor old Ossius was eventually compelled to enter communion with the 'Arian' bishops Ursacius of Singidunum and Valens of Mursa, 'he still would not subscribe against Athanasius', holding out on this issue beyond all others.[56] Just as the famous confessors and martyrs of old had refused to deny Christ and instead declared 'I am a Christian', so here these latest heroes of the faith similarly refuse to deny Athanasius, bearing witness for him in the face of threats and violence.

This central position of Athanasius is also evident from the way in which the text constructs relationships between the bishops. It is known from other evidence that Lucifer had been an envoy to Constantius for Liberius after the Council of Arles, and there are also surviving letters from Lucifer to Eusebius of Vercelli, asking him to attend the Council of Milan, and from Liberius to Lucifer, Eusebius and Dionysius of Milan after their exile at that synod.[57] Ossius had also been an important and well-connected figure in the Church for decades, including taking a leading role at the Council of Serdica in 343.[58] Nonetheless, the *History of the Arians* does not allude to any such independent associations between these men. Even the quartet who are exiled together have only been brought together because of the anti-Athanasian policies of the emperor. The text binds them into a community defined by their support for Athanasius: this is a key reason why they are targeted by Constantius and the Arians and then they repeatedly and steadfastly refuse to renounce him. It would, of course, be wrong to claim that Athanasius was an unimportant individual at this time or that his case was not a matter of concern for these men.[59] What this text does, however, is to simplify relationships and allegiances by presenting the three stories of persecution (Paulinus, Dionysius, Lucifer and Eusebius; Liberius; Ossius) separately and sequentially, uniting them only in so far as they were parts of an anti-Athanasian imperial crusade.

As Julia Hillner demonstrates in her own contribution to this journal, Athanasius crafted his accounts of political affiliations and influence to give prominent roles to imperial

women, particularly in influencing emperors. The network maps here, which are created solely from the representation of events found in the *History of the Arians*, similarly provide a graphic illustration of how he assigned a pivotal role to himself within his own text as the unifying element in the story of the persecution of true, Nicene Christianity. Figure 1 shows all links of all types attested in the text, with Athanasius as one of the main nodes, while his opponents, Constantius II, the 'Arians' and the 'Eusebians', represent the other central (most densely connected) characters. Figure 2 demonstrates all interactions identified as 'hostile', which appear in large numbers clustered around Constantius II and the other 'persecuting' figures in this text.

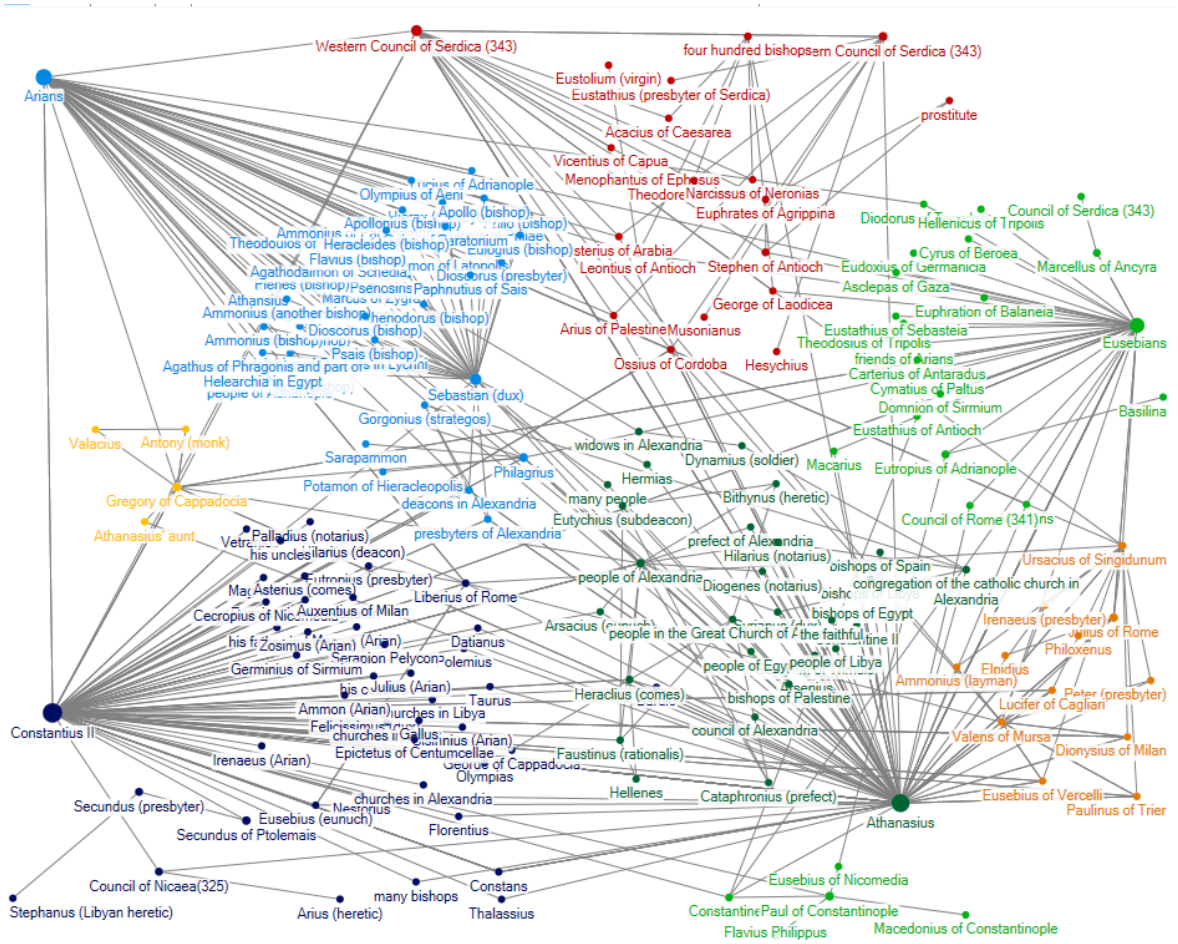

Figure 1: Entire web of relationships as described in *History of the Arians*

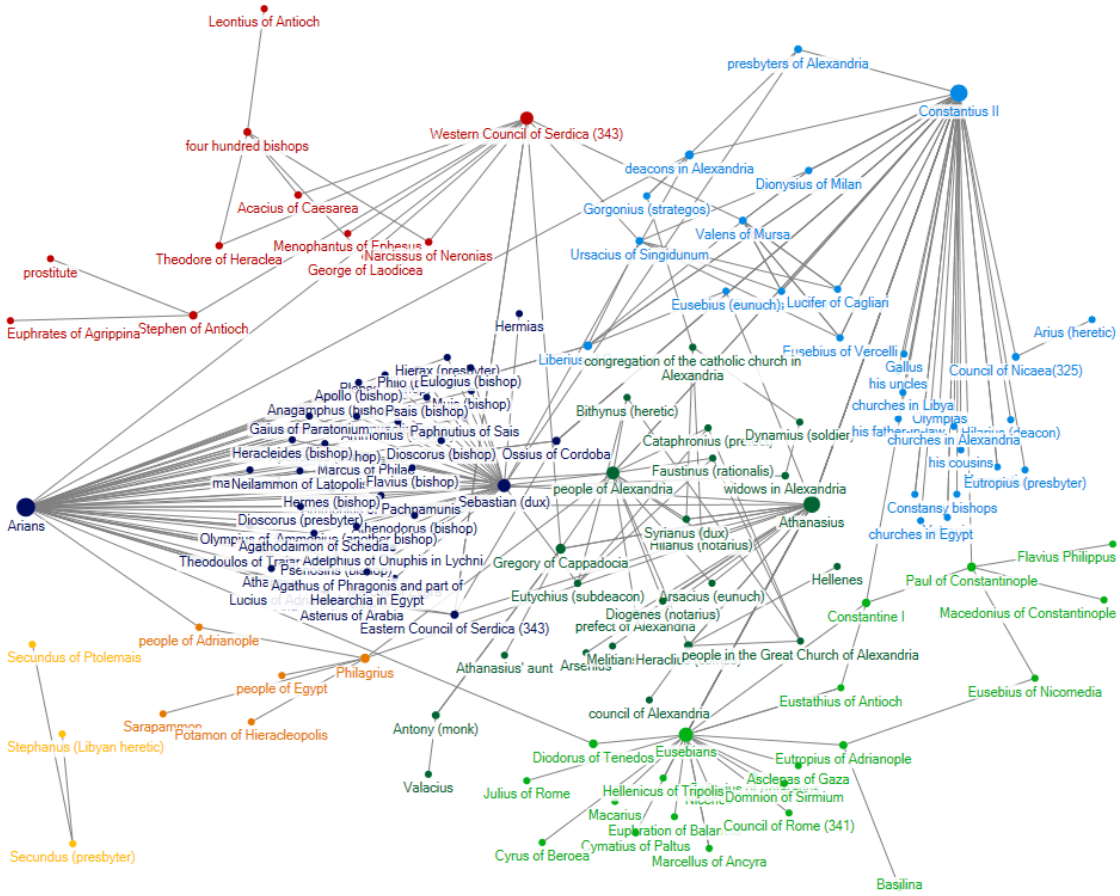

Figure 2: ‘Hostility’ network as described in *History of the Arians*

Figure 3, which provides the starkest illustration of the narrative created by Athanasius here, maps all relationships of support or allegiance. Apart from the branch across the center, which represents Constantius II allowing Athanasius to return from exile in chapter 8 and the end of persecution in Alexandria in chapter 21, there are two extremely clearly defined webs of support: one is the ‘villains’ of the story, focused on Constantius II and his allies, while the other represents the Nicene resistance. In this latter group, there are no separate links between the exiled bishops in the three episodes involving Ossius, Liberius and the Council of Milan: instead, the lines of association radiate out like spokes from the

figure of Athanasius, who sits at the center of a complex web of associations and allegiances. Figure 4 confirms this view: it shows all links described in the chapters of the *History of the Arians* in which the stories of the other exiled bishops are narrated (chapters 33-45 and 75-76). In this network, there are also no links between the other exiled bishops directly. They are only connected with each other either through Athanasius, or through their enemies (Constantius II, 'Arians', Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum).

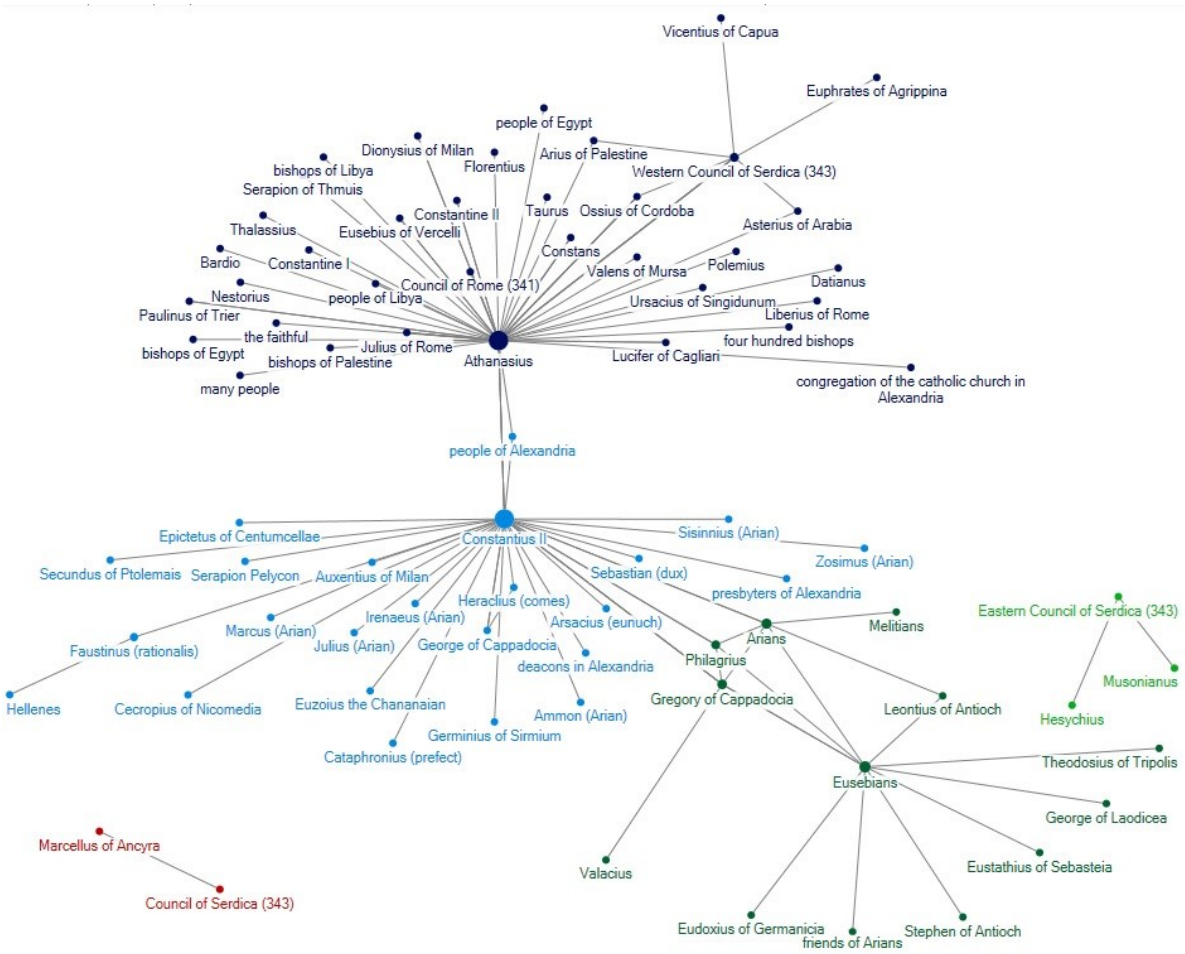

Figure 3: 'Support' network as described in *History of the Arians*

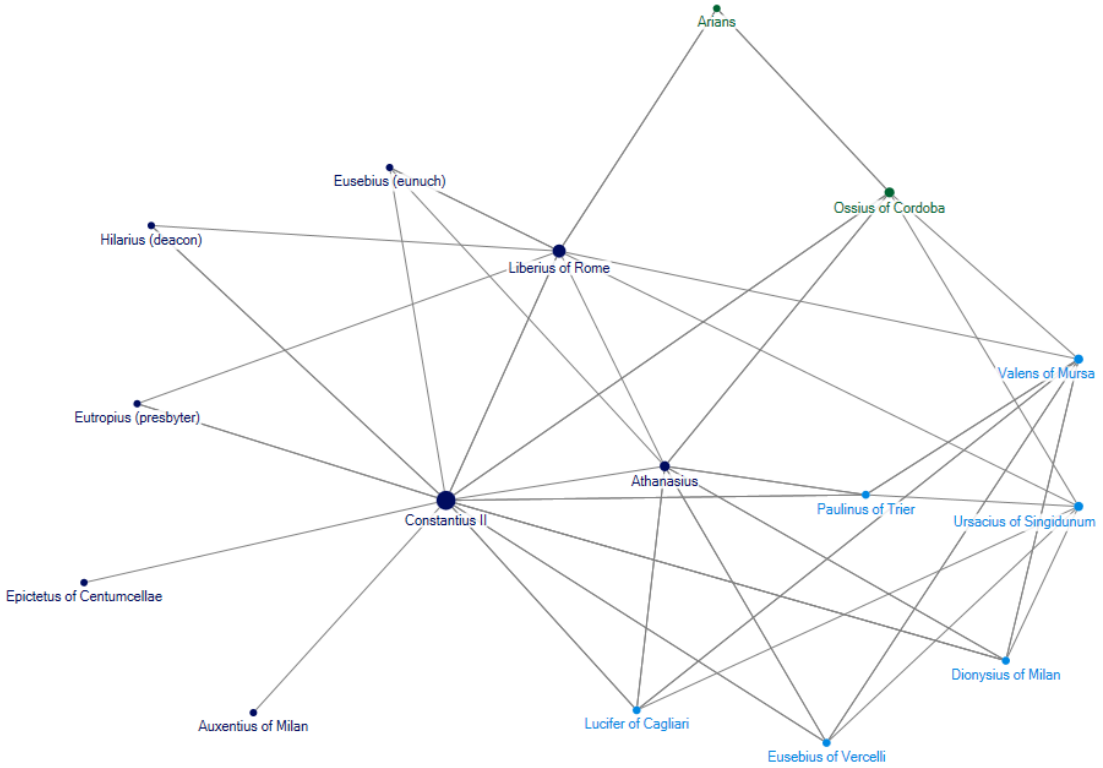

Figure 4: Network described in *History of the Arians*, chs. 33-45 and 75-76

The portrait of a Nicene community that is created within this text is thus one that unites these individuals through Athanasius, who is presented as both their abiding concern and the arbiter of membership within this fellowship of the faithful. This then feeds into the detailed account of the persecution in Alexandria and Egypt in the remainder of the work, where Constantius is described as having 'exiled the true bishops, because they did not act impiously as he wanted, and then he sent the *comes* Heraclius against Athanasius'.[60] Throughout the text, all the major characters, both friends and foes, treat the bishop as the key figure for Nicene resistance against the emperor's plan to impose 'the Arian heresy'.

Unlike the texts of Hilary and Lucifer, the *History of the Arians* does not use the dramatic, rhetorical form of the invective oration, in which the audience might imagine themselves witnessing this diatribe directed against the emperor himself. It did still, however, provide a window into some other examples of religious resistance to tyranny and also acted as one itself. The immediate recipients are unknown, but a manuscript comment at its conclusion describes it as addressed to 'the monks everywhere'.[61] It was also previously thought to be the text referred to in Athanasius' *Epistula ad monachos*, where he instructs the readers to 'send it straight back to us; do not give a copy to anyone or transcribe it for yourselves', although it is now agreed that this refers to a different inflammatory piece.[62] Nonetheless, its polemical tone, together with its composition while Athanasius was in exile and hiding from the authorities, would have made it a potentially dangerous text which, like Hilary and Lucifer's works, was probably only circulated among a relatively select group of people during Constantius' lifetime. As with those invectives, being permitted to receive it would be a sign of admittance into this trusted circle of those deemed worthy and approved for membership by Athanasius. Similarly, just as accepting a bishop's letters was a sign of recognizing communion with him, so doing the same with this text implied a willingness to endorse the sense of an orthodox Nicene community that it created.[63] Moreover, Athanasius went beyond Hilary and Lucifer in his two-fold construction of a network based on himself: it was present both within the text, in the behavior and statements attributed to the actors, and also through the text, in the uniting of sympathetic readers who had been trusted with access to this 'secret history' of the sufferings of Athanasius and his supporters.

Communication and Community in Eusebius

Around the same time that Athanasius was composing this work, one of the Nicene bishops described in his narrative also wrote his own account of his sufferings. After being exiled at the Council of Milan in 355, Eusebius of Vercelli was sent successively to three different locations in the East, the first of which was Scythopolis in Palestine.[64] While he was there, he wrote a letter addressed to his loyal flock in northern Italy, describing his ill-treatment at the hands of the 'Arian' bishop Patrophilus, including being stripped, locked up and almost starved to death, meaning that Eusebius could barely sneak this letter out while the guard was not looking.[65] As has been previously discussed in scholarship, particularly the incisive work of Daniel Washburn, Eusebius' tale probably contains a number of exaggerations, but it is especially notable for his construction of a martyrial persona for himself, as the other bishops discussed in this article also did.[66] Moreover, just like the works of Athanasius, Hilary and Lucifer, it is also a text that seeks to imprint on its audience a particular group identity and to define its relationship with the author in a manner that exalts his status and significance during a period of physical separation.

Unlike the writings discussed above, however, Eusebius' letter contains a clear statement about its intended immediate audience. It opens with a customary epistolary identification of addressee and sender: 'To the most beloved brothers and the dearly missed presbyters and also to the blessed laity of Vercellae, Novaria, Eporedia and also Dertona remaining in the faith, Eusebius the bishop sends eternal greetings in the Lord'.[67] This apparently innocuous salutation does, however, already begin the process of defining a community and its structure. Although Eusebius was geographically and institutionally isolated at this time, having been condemned at a church council, he nonetheless here maintains his claim not only to the rank of bishop but also to jurisdiction over these particular communities by right of holding the see of Vercelli. It is unclear whether Eusebius had been formally removed from his see at Milan in 355. The city's own bishop, Dionysius, was

replaced with the 'Arian' Auxentius, who remained in post until his death, when he was succeeded by Ambrose. In contrast, no replacements are known for Eusebius, Lucifer or Hilary, and it may be that new bishops were not appointed in their stead because their sees were smaller and less significant than Milan. Nonetheless, the sentence of exile imposed on Eusebius was an act that sought to prevent him from exercising his role as bishop, either in Vercelli or elsewhere, and the greeting used in this letter represents a clear and forceful reaction to that attempt.

At the beginning of the main text of the letter, Eusebius describes how, despite receiving visits from 'brothers, who came to us from many different provinces', he was saddened not to have heard from his flock in a while.[68] At that point, however, he was overjoyed to receive messages from each of them, as well as being visited by Syrus the deacon and Victorinus the exorcist, and he invokes an Old Testament story to articulate his feelings: 'And so I discovered, most beloved brothers, that you were safe, as I hoped, and I thought that I had travelled to you, as though snatched suddenly from the most remote part of the earth, as was Habakkuk, who was borne by the angel all the way to Daniel.'[69] The biblical incident described here, which appears in Bel and the Dragon, is one in which the prophet Habakkuk, who had been preparing a meal, was miraculously brought to Daniel in the lions' den in order to feed him.[70] At first glance, it might appear that the simile is confused: since Eusebius is the imprisoned figure, he would seem to be a better fit for the character of Daniel, while the visiting clerics, who brought him both letters and resources, ostensibly play the role of Habakkuk. Yet, by inverting this obvious interpretation, Eusebius here transforms his community in Italy into the figures who find themselves in need, and who will be sustained and rejuvenated by contact with their bishop. Moreover, this exchange of letters is presented as possessing the power to elide the distance between Eusebius and his supporters, making it seem as though he was actually present with them, as Habakkuk was with Daniel. This image

of physical presence through textual communication is then reiterated by the bishop in the next part of the letter, where he continues to describe his joy at reading the letters, using the phrases 'believing myself to converse with you I forgot my former toils' and 'I suddenly thought myself, as I said above, not to be in exile but to be with you'.[71] Despite his geographical dislocation from his see, Eusebius is here keen to emphasize that he remains very much at the heart of his community in northern Italy.

This sense of his own significance is also created through his references to the resources that had been supplied to him by his correspondents and which he went on to use to provide alms to the poor in Scythopolis.[72] As Washburn has argued, the act of almsgiving in this city was a means by which Eusebius could try to continue to act as a bishop, even if he was no longer widely recognized as one, and thus also implicitly criticize Patrophilus for his failure to perform such actions in his own see.[73] This can be seen both in the activity itself and also in Eusebius' narration of it to his correspondents, demonstrating that he maintains these episcopal functions despite his exile. Moreover, his discussion of the *fructus* ('offerings' or 'resources') that have come from Vercelli for this purpose also focuses attention back on his own role. He states that part of his reason for feeling like he is close to his flock is because of the 'offerings of donations' (*fructum porrigentia*) he has received from them, and he also declares that 'I rejoice in the *fructus* which you have established not only there but even distribute far and wide'.[74] At this point, however, Eusebius moves on to use *fructus* with another of its meanings, namely actual 'fruit', as part of a metaphor about arboriculture:

> For just like a farmer who has planted a good tree, which because of its *fructus* does not suffer the axe, nor is surrendered to fire, thus to your sanctity we wish and desire not only to practise slavery according to the flesh but also to devote our souls to your salvation. As I said, you have extended branches firm with *fructus* and you have

> laboured to reach me through such long distances of the world. As a farmer I rejoice and cheerfully pick the apples of your labour.[75]

This passage does, therefore, contain much praise of his allies in Vercelli and the surrounding area, since they have been working so hard to do good works in many places and to reach Eusebius in far-away Palestine. Nonetheless, the ultimate responsibility for this success is firmly located in the bishop himself. He is the man who had established this productive community, the farmer who had planted this good tree, and so the *fructus* that he receives from it is the result of his great care and expertise. Like the profit from an investment (another meaning of *fructus*), it now became available to him to use in Scythopolis:

> When, following the divine instructions and wanting with you to make heavenly *fructus* from earthly, stable from crumbling, eternal from fragile, we began to plant seeds, suffering through necessity every day, the poor rejoiced at your *fructus* and not only were the men of this town glorifying God, but all those who have been able to see or hear, seeing from these *fructus* how much love you have with me, were glorifying God and endowing us with every honour along with your blessing.[76]

Eusebius was well pleased with his creation and could use his fruit to plant new trees through his almsgiving. Respect and reverence for the bishop is described here as spreading through the city and beyond to those who witnessed or learned about these events, thus expanding the community of believers who looked to Eusebius as the bringer of great benefits to people over a wide area.[77] This representation builds on the preceding reference to Habakkuk and Daniel: while it might appear that the source of sustenance was the Italians, in fact it is revealed to be Eusebius, who can take the credit both for creating this strong and faithful community and also reinvesting its produce profitably in order to expand it with new members.

It was this success that, according to Eusebius, led to Patrophilus and his 'Ariomaniacs' becoming enraged and acting violently towards him, including locking him away and potentially leaving him to starve to death. His letter provides some direct narration of these events, but it also incorporates the text of another letter which Eusebius sent to Patrophilus during his harshest confinement, declaring that he was not afraid to die for his faith.[78] This embedded epistle is addressed to 'Patrophilus the guard [*custos*] and his men', depriving his correspondent of his episcopal rank by describing him simply as a *custos*.[79] As with the invectives of Hilary and Lucifer, however, it is worth looking beyond this salutation and considering other, indirect addressees of the letter. It certainly gained a wider audience through its inclusion within Eusebius' missive back to his Italian supporters, but the quoted text itself also deserves further scrutiny. As with Lucifer 'reminding' Constantius of events in which they had both been involved, it is notable that not only is this letter very vehement in its criticism of Patrophilus, but it also describes the cruel way in which he had kidnapped and imprisoned Eusebius. He would, of course, already know about what had happened, especially since Eusebius stresses that 'the town is aware' of it as well.[80] Daniel Washburn concludes that Eusebius had probably retained a copy of his letter and so was able to include it here at a later date, but also posits that he may have edited it for recirculation to give a starker presentation of heroes and villains.[81] This is certainly possible, although Eusebius may also have written it originally with a wider audience than Patrophilus in mind, or potentially even have invented it for inclusion here.[82]

Whatever the circumstances of its composition, the text as it is transmitted in *Letter* 2 certainly proclaims its intention to bring its message to a wide audience, and, perhaps more importantly, declares that Eusebius was capable of achieving this aim. At the conclusion of this embedded document, there appears the following subscription before the main narrative resumes: 'I, Eusebius the bishop, have signed here for my part. I entreat you, who will read

this letter, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit not to stifle it but to hand it over to be read by another.'[83] This is usually treated as part of the letter to Patrophilus, not of the text of the framing letter, as is evident from the placement of the quotation marks in the text of the standard critical edition.[84] Nonetheless, this request seems out of place in a letter intended only for the eyes of Patrophilus and his companions. It is also notable that, while the earlier, quoted letter to these men and also the main epistle to the Nicene community in Italy both address their recipients with the plural form of you (*uos*), this concluding sentence here uses the singular (*te*). Eusebius appears to have shifted from directly addressing either of the sets of recipients specified for the two letters and is instead speaking to a generic 'you', referring to anyone into whose hands the letter might come. This statement therefore carries both an implication of wider, independent circulation and also an instruction for this to take place, since the reader is asked to pass it on. It is, of course, impossible to say whether this phrase formed part of the letter as sent to Patrophilus or whether it was added later. Despite this uncertainty, however, it is clear that Eusebius was declaring his intention and ability to reach an audience beyond the groups for whom these two letters were ostensibly intended. Eusebius addresses an implied audience and asks them to play their part in promulgating and popularizing his version of events.

The main text of *Letter* 2 also concludes with a greeting, from both Eusebius and 'the presbyters and deacons who are with me', to everyone in the Nicene community of Vercelli and its surrounding area, as well as a request to pass on greetings on Eusebius' behalf to other sympathetic people elsewhere.[85] This is all achieved through this letter, which, its author claims, he had to smuggle out from his imprisonment with the help of Syrus: 'we have scarcely been able to write this letter at all, always beseeching God to restrain the guards and allow the deacon to bear some letter of greeting to you rather than merely an announcement of our toil'.[86] The degree of exaggeration in this statement has been questioned, especially

due to the length of the letter itself.[87] For his construction of a sense of community, however, what matters most is not the veracity of his claims, but the fact that he presents himself as succeeding despite these restrictions. Even though his enemies have tried their hardest to stop him corresponding with the outside world, he is nonetheless proclaiming his ability to maintain his community intact, and even to enlarge it during his exile. Moreover, like the other texts discussed in this article, Eusebius' letter also presents itself to its readers as a dangerous artefact, allowing them to regard themselves as part of a chosen group of the persecuted faithful.

This theme of widespread knowledge is also present in the quoted letter to Patrophilus where Eusebius declares that each member of the Trinity is aware of the persecution he is being subjected to, and also that 'the catholic Church' is a witness.[88] He even defiantly instructs Patrophilus to 'know that I will assemble the churches, which while imprisoned I am able to reach through letters, and I will assemble the servants of God so that with them coming together the world might realise what the unblemished faith, which has been approved by all the orthodox bishops, suffers at the hands of the Ariomaniacs.'[89] In his analysis of this letter, Daniel Washburn remarks that 'surely Eusebius indulges in a moment of overconfidence when he claims the ability to summon an ecclesiastical council. Nonetheless, his faith in his ability to reach a wide audience had some validity.'[90] Rather than being taken as a literal threat to convene a council, the exiled bishop's bold declaration might instead be read as a claim about the epistolary network that he constructs within and through these letters. The reader is thus invited to see themselves as a member of this fellowship, accepted and acknowledged by Eusebius as a servant of God and an orthodox member of the true Church. The bishop of Vercelli presents himself as a figure with the authority to call an ecclesiastical council, while any member of the audience who finds themselves in possession of this text is granted the honor of sitting in judgement within this virtual assembly. It may be

geographically spread across the empire, like the audience for Hilary and Lucifer's invectives, but it is united in its purpose and in its recognition of the persecuted Eusebius as its founder and leader.

* * *

These texts can be taken to demonstrate the variety of forms of literary opposition employed by Nicene exiles in the final years of the reign of Constantius II. All of them used the language of persecution and martyrdom to transform their insecurity into a mark of their place within a long line of revered figures from Christian history.[91] It should, however, also be recognized that they each created their own claims about the nature of their audience and their own places within these communities of readers, exploiting the opportunities provided by these different, recognizable literary forms. For Hilary and Lucifer, the 'genre' of the polemical oration was a technique for constructing an imagined theatre of *parrhesia*, in which a select group of people were invited to witness the demolition of the emperor's authority and the fearlessness of the bishops. Invectives, like panegyric, could thus be a powerful tool for the negotiation of status, even without being recited in a public ceremonial context. In his *History of the Arians*, Athanasius similarly bound his audience together as a bold community of the faithful, holding out against the cruelty of temporal authority. In addition to this, his narrative presents a sequence of episodes in which the major characters themselves are also united through their association with the bishop himself, who becomes the lynchpin of an orthodox fellowship that spans the Roman empire. By contrast, Eusebius did not attack the emperor directly, or characterize his writing as so powerful and inflammatory that only a chosen few could be trusted with it. Instead, he trumpeted his ability to overcome his imprisonment and broadcast his message far and wide. His letters, one nested within the

other, present him as a man who has succeeded in establishing a strong, productive network of followers and who can then continue to nourish and increase it regardless of Patrophilus' attempts to stifle him. These texts therefore represent a set of related but distinctive responses to the challenge of institutional and geographical isolation that came with clerical exile: Hilary and Lucifer's status as exiles who had suffered at the hands of persecuting imperial authorities only strengthened their claims to *parrhesia*; Athanasius wrote a narrative that made himself the focus of this persecution, and thus the most important representative of orthodoxy; Eusebius emphasized his physical confinement in a way that made his ability to overcome it and reach out to his network of supporters appear all the more impressive. Despite the differences between their rhetorical strategies, all four authors were united in their self-presentation as important churchmen who were firmly at the heart of supportive communities of orthodoxy.

[1] Hilary, *In Constantium* 7 (Sources chrétiennes 334: 180). All translations of this text are from R. Flower, *Imperial Invectives against Constantius II: Athanasius of Alexandria, Hilary of Poitiers and Lucifer of Cagliari*, Translated Texts for Historians 67 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).

[2] On the history of the text and the issue of its date, see H. C. Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II.: Untersuchungen zur dritten Phase des arianischen Streites (337–361)*, Patristische Texte und Studien 26 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 361; T. D. Barnes, Review of A. Rocher, ed., *Hilaire de Poitiers: Contre Constance*, *Journal of Theological Studies* (n.s.) 39 (1988): 609–11 at 610; Flower, *Imperial Invectives*, 29-30, all supporting this date. In contrast, L. R. Wickham, *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-century Church*, Translated Texts for Historians 25 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), ix argues that it was composed after the death of Constantius II in 361, while A. Rocher, ed., *Hilaire de Poitiers: Contre Constance*, Sources chrétiennes 334 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1987), 29-38 produces a complicated solution that involves a two-stage writing process, with an initial draft being revised once Constantius was dead.

[3] The position patronized by Constantius at the time of the text's composition is now generally described using the less polemical term 'Homoian', on account of the key theological term *homoios* used in the creeds agreed at the Councils of Seleucia-Ariminum in 359 and Constantinople in 360. The development of 'Homoian' theology and the careers of its main supporters at this time are discussed in detail in H. C. Brennecke, *Studien zur Geschichte der Homöer. Der Osten bis zum Ende der homöischen Reichskirche*, Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 73 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988).

[4] Hilary's more flattering, earlier letter to Constantius survives under the title of *Ad Constantium*. There is a significant debate over the causes of Hilary's exile, which is

summarized neatly at C. L. Beckwith, "The condemnation and exile of Hilary of Poitiers at the Synod of Béziers (356 C.E.)," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005): 21–38 at 21-4.

[5] On the ideology and literature of persecution and martyrdom that underpins these fourth-century texts, as well as debate over the genesis of the concept within Christianity, see, for example, G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); D. Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 93-126; E. A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); L. Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004).

[6] Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum* 68.3 (edited by H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius: Werke* II.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935–41), 183-230), here at 220; Lucifer, *Moriundum esse pro dei filio* 12 (CCSL 8: 293). Translations of both these texts are from Flower, *Imperial Invectives*.

[7] These texts were Hilary's *Ad Constantium* and Athanasius' *Defence to Constantius* (*Apologia ad Constantium*). D. M. Gwynn, *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the 'Arian Controversy'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13 argues that the latter was begun before Athanasius' flight from Alexandria in early 356 and then revised and extended in 357.

[8] Lucifer and Eusebius were both exiled at the Council of Milan in 355 and, after Eusebius' period in Scythopolis, he went on the Thebaid, where Lucifer also resided at this time. After the death of Constantius, Eusebius travelled to Alexandria where he attended a council convened by Athanasius and then carried its decisions to Antioch, where Lucifer had already gone: see R. Flower, *Emperors and Bishops in Late Roman Invective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 156, 224-5. Athanasius and Lucifer were certainly aware of each other's tribulations and mentioned them in their work, but there is no evidence of direct

contact between them. None of the other three bishops reveals any knowledge of Hilary during this time.

[9] See M. Humphries, "In Nomine Patris: Constantine the Great and Constantius II in Christological polemic," *Historia* 46 (1997): 448–64; M. Humphries, "Savage humour: Christian anti-panegyric in Hilary of Poitiers' *Against Constantius*," in *The Propaganda of Power: The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity*, ed. M. Whitby, *Mnemosyne* Supplementum 183 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 201–23; D. A. Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors: a reinterpretation of Eusebius of Vercelli's Letter from Scythopolis," *Church History* 78 (2009): 731-55; R. Flower, "The emperor's new past: re-enactment and inversion in Christian invectives against Constantius II," in *Unclassical Traditions, Volume I: Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. C. Kelly, R. Flower and M. S. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 2010), 28-43; Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*; Flower, *Imperial Invectives*; with relevant references to existing scholarship on each of the works individually.

[10] On this issue, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 87-8, together with the scholarship discussed there. Most scholars assume that the texts of Athanasius, Hilary and Lucifer circulated among a relatively small circle of supportive individuals, at least until Constantius was safely dead. The notion that some of Lucifer's writing may have been sent to the emperor himself is suggested by the extant exchange of letters between Lucifer and the *magister officiorum*, Florentius: see G. F. Diercks, ed., *Luciferi Calaritani opera quae supersunt*, CCSL 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), 305. Even if this does imply that some or all of his invectives were delivered to the imperial court, that should not lead automatically to the conclusion that Constantius was the sole, or even the main, audience for them at this time. For the opposite view, see S. Laconi, "Figure retoriche e argomentazione nell'opera di Lucifero di Cagliari," *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Cagliari*

n.s. 20 (2002): 223–99 at 227; S. Laconi, *Costanzo II: ritratto di un imperatore eretico* (Rome: Herder, 2004), 119-20.

[11] G. B. Conte, *Genres and Readers: Lucretius, Love elegy, Pliny's Encyclopedia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, originally published as *Generi e lettori: Lucrezio, l'elegia d'amore, l'enciclopedia di Plinio* (Milan: A. Mondadori, 1991)), 112.

[12] Conte, *Genres and Readers*, 112.

[13] Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* 44 (Opitz 207-209).

[14] On the practice of network analysis and its challenges, see also Julia Hillner's preface to this special issue.

[15] I would like to thank this special issue's editor, Julia Hillner, for first suggesting the possibility of using this technology for my discussion of Athanasius, as well as for creating the network maps from my spreadsheet of data on his presentation of relationships in this text.

[16] For discussion of the relevant material, including late-antique rhetorical *progymnasmata*, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 44-55.

[17] Notable claims to truth-telling by panegyrists include Pliny's *Panegyricus* (on which see S. Bartsch, *Actors in the Audience: Theatricality and Doublespeak from Nero to Hadrian*, Revealing Antiquity 6 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 149-54; B. Gibson, "Contemporary contexts," in *Pliny's Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World*, ed. P. Roche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 104-24 especially 116-24) and Themistius' foregrounding of his *ēthos* as a philosopher in speeches delivered to a succession of emperors from Constantius II to Theodosius I.

[18] For example, Richard Hanson describes Hilary's *In Constantium* as the product of him becoming 'disillusioned by the upshot of the Council of Ariminum' and characterizes Lucifer as someone who 'faintly realizes how unbecoming to his episcopal status it is to be occupied

in such frenzied rantings at the Emperor': R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 470, 323. Although these statements contain criticism of the hyperbole and inaccuracy of the invectives, there is no sense that they are anything other than sincere in their rage. See also Timothy Barnes' description of Athanasius' *History of the Arians* as a text which 'states outright much that Athanasius deemed it politic to suppress or to veil when he was writing to defend or justify himself to a neutral or hostile audience': T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius: Theology and Politics in the Constantinian Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 126.

[19] While Pliny was responding specifically to the circumstances in 100 C.E. after the fall of Domitian, Themistius' surviving works testify to a series of such occasions during his career: see Themistius, *Or.* 15.190a-197a, 16.205d-206c (edited by G. Downey, *Themistii Orationes* 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1965), here at 275-83, 295-6); J. Vanderspoel, *Themistius and the Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty, and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 195-203.

[20] Hilary, *In Const.* 1 (Sources chrétiennes 334: 166). This passage also includes an allusion to Ecclesiastes 3.7, thereby giving even greater authority to his words through this alignment with Scripture.

[21] Hilary, *In Const.* 3 (Sources chrétiennes 334: 172).

[22] P. R. L. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 61-70.

[23] Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 68-70.

[24] Themistius, *Or.* 15.190a-b (Downey 275).

[25] Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 117; C. Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, The Transformation of the Classical

Heritage 37 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), especially 59-60, 75-6, 86-90, 268.

[26] On this phenomenon, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 148-50, with the examples of the use of the term *parrhesia* cited there.

[27] Athanasius, *Hist. Ar.* 71.1 (Opitz 221-2).

[28] Lucifer, *Moriundum* 11 (CCSL 8: 290-1).

[29] Hilary, *In Constantium* 5 (Sources chrétiennes 334: 176). For more extensive discussion of this theme in the invectives of these three men, as well as how this played into their self-presentation, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, especially 106-117, 127-55, 163-77; Flower, *Imperial Invectives*, 35-8.

[30] Syn. *De regno* 15.5. References follow J. Lamoureux and N. Aujoulat, edd. *Synésios de Cyrène. Tome V: Opuscules II*, Collection des Universités de France, série grecque 464 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008), here at 112. On this work see, among others, J. Bregman, *Synesius of Cyrene: Philosopher-Bishop*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 49-59; P. Heather, "The anti-Scythian tirade of Synesius' *De regno*," *Phoenix* 42 (1988): 152-72; Alan Cameron and J. Long, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 19 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 103-42; W. Hagl, *Arcadius Apis Imperator: Synesios von Kyrene und sein Beitrag zum Herrscherideal der Spätantike*, Frankfurter althistorische Beiträge 1 (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1997), 63-102; H. Brandt, "Die Rede περί βασιλείας des Synesios von Kyrene – ein ungewöhnlicher Fürstenspiegel," in *Consuetudinis amor: fragments d'histoire romaine (II^{e}-VI^{e} siècles) offerts à Jean-Pierre Callu*, ed. F. Chausson and E. Wolff, Saggi di storia antica 19 (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2003), 57-70, as well as the edition with French translation, introduction and notes in Lamoureux and Aujoulat, *Synésios de Cyrène*.

[31] Syn. *De regno* 14.3 (Lamoureux and Aujoulat: 108-109). This animal has been variously identified as a jellyfish, a mollusc or a sea-cucumber. The image is a learned allusion to Plato, *Philebus* 21c.

[32] Syn. *De regno* 2.1 (Lamoureux and Aujoulat: 85). The previous sentence summarizes chapter 1 of the work.

[33] For examples of this type of interpretation, see, *inter alia*, S. MacCormack, "Latin prose panegyrics," in *Empire and Aftermath: Silver Latin II*, ed. T. A. Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 143-205; S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); U. Asche, *Roms Weltherrschaftsidee und Aussenpolitik in der Spätantike im Spiegel der Panegyrici Latini* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1983); M.-C. L'Huillier, *L'empire des mots: Orateurs gaulois et empereurs romains, 3^{e} et 4^{e} siècles*, Centre de Recherches d'Histoire Ancienne 114 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992); R. Rees, *Layers of Loyalty in Latin Panegyric, AD 289-307* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 6-19; Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 35-44.

[34] MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony*, 9.

[35] Rees, *Layers of Loyalty*, 15. Rees is not suggesting here that panegyric cannot incorporate dialogue, but rather that it also ascribed roles to the audience, instead of merely presenting particular versions of the speaker and the honorand.

[36] For more details of such critical views, as well as some choice quotations, see R. Rees, "The modern history of Latin panegyric," in *Latin Panegyric*, ed. R. Rees (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-48 at 15-16.

[37] The most influential presentation of panegyric as public lying comes from Augustine's account of his time as a public orator in *Confessions* 6.6, which is, of course, a piece of rhetorical self-construction in its own right.

[38] On Pliny's revision, expansion, re-performance and distribution of his *Panegyricus*, as well as the opportunities this gave him for self-presentation, see C. F. Noreña, "Self-fashioning in the *Panegyricus*," in *Pliny's Praise: The Panegyricus in the Roman World*, ed. P. Roche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29-44 at 40-41. Libanius' *Or.* 14 was sent to Julian in writing, but his *Or.* 15 appears never to have been delivered to him in any form, instead probably being recited to a select audience later on: see J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Antioch: City and Imperial Administration in the Later Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 25-6, which also gives examples of copies of speeches sent to other people after delivery. Libanius' speeches concerning the Riot of the Statues in Antioch in 387, including *Or.* 19 and 20 to Theodosius I, employ the literary conceit of having been delivered during the events themselves, but are believed to have been written later: see P.-L. Malosse, "Libanius' *Orations*," in *Libanius: A Critical Introduction*, ed. L. van Hoof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 81-106 at 85.

[39] Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 78-177.

[40] All of these can be found together in Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 67-9 (Opitz 220-1). Lucifer also uses extended comparisons with Saul and Ahab at *De Athanasio I* 13-20 (CCSL 8: 23-36). The accusation of being the Antichrist also appears at Hilary, *In Const.* 1, 5, 6 and 11 (Sources chrétiennes 334: 166, 176, 178 and 192), while Lucifer calls Constantius the precursor and friend of the Antichrist at *Moriundum* 1, 11 (CCSL 8: 266, 290), as well as 'general of the Antichrist' at *De Athanasio I* 40 (CCSL 8: 69). On the similarities between the *exempla* used in all three texts, including biblical villains and later persecutors of Christians, as well as the question of whether these are the result of contact between the bishops during this period, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 92-5, 106-117, 123-4.

[41] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 31-45 (Opitz 199-209).

[42] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 33.7 (Opitz 202). Even though the four bishops were not all exiled on the same occasion, Athanasius' narrative here compresses the two councils into a single episode. See also *Hist. Ar.* 76.3 (Opitz 225) for other comments ascribed to Constantius at this encounter.

[43] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 34.1 (Opitz 202).

[44] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 34.4 (Opitz 202).

[45] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 39.2 (Opitz 205).

[46] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 39.2-40.2 (Opitz 205). At 39.3, Liberius quotes the words of Christ to Saul on the road to Damascus from Acts 9.5.

[47] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 44 (Opitz 207-209). On this letter and the question of its authenticity, see Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 155.

[48] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 44.1 (Opitz 207)

[49] See Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 45 (Opitz 209)

[50] Lucifer, *Moriundum* 1, 4 (CCSL 8: 266, 272).

[51] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 22, 24 (Opitz 194-5, 196)

[52] The only moment when he is seen performing an action is a brief mention of his departure from one of his churches after it was attacked by the *dux* Syrianus in February 356: *Hist. Ar.* 48.3 (Opitz 211). More detail about this incident is provided in the petition sent by the Nicene Christians of Alexandria and appended as chapter 81 of the text.

[53] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 30.3 (Opitz 199)

[54] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 33.7, 35.5, 36.1, 41.3, 44.8 (Opitz 201, 203, 203, 206, 208).

[55] Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 128, 155.

[56] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 45.5 (Opitz 209). Liberius did eventually agree, but, at *Hist. Ar.* 41.3-4 (Opitz 206), Athanasius made a point of emphasizing his resolve and explaining that he was not persuaded to change his mind: 'the exiled Liberius gave way two years later and

subscribed because he was frightened by the threat of death. But this reveals both their violent behaviour and also Liberius' hatred of the heresy and his vote for Athanasius, when he still had a free choice. Statements produced under torture and against a person's original judgement express the wishes not of the intimidated, but of the torturers. These men tried everything for the sake of their heresy'.

[57] On Lucifer as envoy, see Liberius' letter to Constantius at Hilary, *Adu. Val. et Ursac.* A.VII (CSEL 65: 89-93). The other two letters are translated at Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 238-41.

[58] See the letter from the 'Western' bishops at Serdica to Julius of Rome, preserved at Hilary, *Adu. Val. et Ursac.* B.II.2 (CSEL 65: 126-30), with Ossius appearing first in the list of signatories at B.II.4 (CSEL 65: 131-9).

[59] See, for example, remarks about the treatment of Athanasius in Liberius' letter to Constantius preceding the Council of Milan in 355: Hilary, *Adu. Val. et Ursac.* A.VII (CSEL 65: 89-93).

[60] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 54.1 (Opitz 213). For more information about this imperial official, see PLRE I 418-9 (Heraclius 3).

[61] Ath. *Hist. Ar.* 80.4. On this issue of the intended audience, if there was one, see Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 126; Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 41; Flower, *Imperial Invectives*, 25-6.

[62] Ath. *Epistula ad monachos* 3.3 (edited by H. G. Opitz, *Athanasius: Werke* II.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1935–41), 181-2), here at 182. On this issue, see Opitz, *Athanasius: Werke*, 181; Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 278 n. 23; Gwynn, *The Eusebians*, 41.

[63] For the idea of refusing to receive letters as a way of demonstrating the denial of communion, see, for example, the instructions given to other clerics in the letter sent to Africa by the 'Eastern' bishops at Serdica in 343 at Hilary, *Adu. Val. et Ursac.* A.IV.1.15-16,

24, 28 (CSEL 65: 58-9, 63, 67), as well as the letters of the Nicene bishops at the same council at B.II.1.8 and B.II.2.5 (CSEL 65: 121-6, 130).

[64] On his exile more generally, see M. Simonetti, "Eusebio nella controversia ariana," in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. E. dal Covolo, R. Uglione and G. M. Vian, Biblioteca di scienze religiose 133 (Rome: LAS, 1997) 155-79 at 159-62; G. Pelland, "Eusebio e Ilario di Poitiers," in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, in *Eusebio di Vercelli e il suo tempo*, ed. E. dal Covolo, R. Uglione and G. M. Vian, Biblioteca di scienze religiose 133 (Rome: LAS, 1997), 247-54 at 247-8. Epiphanius of Salamis also describes encountering Eusebius during his time in Scythopolis: see *Panarion* 30.5.2 (GCS n.f. 10/1: 229).

[65] This is known as his *Letter* 2. The text can be found in V. Bulhart, ed., *Eusebii Vercellensis episcopi quae supersunt*, CCSL 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1957) v-xxxvi, 1-205 at 104-9 and an English translation at Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 243-9, from which all translations here are taken.

[66] Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors". See also Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 155-62.

[67] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.Title (CCSL 9:104).

[68] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.1 (CCSL 9:104).

[69] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.1 (CCSL 9:104). Syrus and Victorinus, who brought these letters to Eusebius, are otherwise unknown: see PCBE II.2 2149 (Syrus 1), 2293 (Victorinus 2).

[70] Bel and the Dragon 33-39.

[71] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.2 (CCSL 9:104).

[72] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.2, 6 (CCSL 9:104-5, 107).

[73] Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors", 741-2.

[74] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.2 (CCSL 9:104).

[75] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.2 (CCSL 9:104-5).

[76] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.2 (CCSL 9:105).

[77] Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors", 747-8 questions the extent of Eusebius' actual success through these efforts, using Epiphanius' account as independent evidence for the small number of Nicene Christians in the city. While it is not possible to get an accurate sense of this, especially since Epiphanius may have had his own reasons for downplaying the number of 'orthodox' men in the city, what matters here is that Eusebius created a sense of his burgeoning community in this letter.

[78] This letter appears at Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.4-5 (CCSL 9:106-7).

[79] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.4 (CCSL 9:106).

[80] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.4 (CCSL 9:106).

[81] Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors", 749.

[82] My intention is not to argue for the latter reading, but rather to note that it cannot be ruled out.

[83] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.5 (CCSL 9:107): *item subscripsi ego Eusebius episcopus. adiuro te, qui has litteras legeris, per patrem, filium et spiritum sanctum, ut non supprimas, sed alii legendas tradas*.

[84] Bulhart, *Eusebii Vercellensis*, 107. The quotation marks are retained in the translation at M. Di Maio and A. Cunningham, *The Early Church and the State* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 67.

[85] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.11 (CCSL 9:109).

[86] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.10 (CCSL 9:109).

[87] For some interpretations that regard Eusebius' account of his sufferings as essentially reliable, see D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 60; Pelland, "Eusebio e Ilario di Poitiers", 247-8. Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors", 737-9 surveys such readings well and then concludes (at 747) that Eusebius' confinement was not as strict as he claims.

[88] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.5 (CCSL 9:106).

[89] Eus. Verc. *Ep.* 2.5 (CCSL 9:107).

[90] Washburn, "Tormenting the tormentors", 746-7.

[91] See Flower, *Emperors and Bishops*, 127-77.